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Honors Humanities

Mrs. Goodrich

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The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde

Chapters 12-16

**Summary:**

Chapter 12 begins with Basil Hallward running into Dorian Gray on the streets; their first encounter in months. Dorian pretends to not see Basil, but Basil catches a glimpse of him and in excitement runs over to Dorian. He immediately tells Dorian there is something they must talk about privately, and Basil invites himself back to Dorian’s house. The two enter the home and Basil begins attacking Dorian’s character stating that many nobles are spreading awful rumors about him. Dorian laughs and says the matter does not interest him. In awe Basil questions Dorian’s soul. In response to this, Dorian tells Basil he can see what his soul truly looks like if he follows him upstairs. The curtain is yanked of the portrait Basil painted, and the horrid image stares back at him, revealing just how demented Dorian’s soul has become. At first Basil refuses to believe it is true, then quickly drops to his knees and begins to pray for forgiveness for Dorian. Enraged by this, Dorian stabs him in the neck 3 times and murders him in the study. To make himself look innocent he walks outside and pretends to have just arrived home.

Dorian is meticulous in hiding the evidence and refuses to be caught. He even brings in an old friend Allen Campbell to help him conceal evidence. Campbell and Dorian were once friends, but then turned enemies because of the affect Dorian’s friendship with Lord Henry Wotton had on him. Therefore in order for Campbell to help him, Dorian black mailed him.

Dorian and Henry attended a party together at Lady Narborough’s house after Campbell had cleaned up Dorian’s mess (to lack of Henry’s knowledge). Dorian left the party early, and once he had arrived home he found something rather strange, a small Chinese box filled with a green paste. Around midnight he snuck out of his house and bribed a man to drive him down past the river. He spoke to him in hushed tones and with his head buried.

Dorian arrived at a shady bar filled with what appeared to be prostitutes and a bunch of drunken men. He met up with a man named Adrian whom he was not please was there, so he left. As he was leaving Sibyl Vane’s brother, James Vane followed him out of the bar, pulled him into an alley and pointed a gun at him. Dorian out smarted him by telling him to look at his face, for Dorian is nearly 40, but still looks like he is in his early 20s. The man James is looking for would have to be at least 40, but because he didn’t know Dorian’s age, only the age he appeared Dorian got away. A mysterious woman came up behind James and told him about the real Dorian and said she had known him for well over 18 years and he hadn’t changed a bit. He gave her money for a place to stay, and that is where chapter 16 leaves off.

**Analysis:**

I was extremely surprised by this section of the book. Basil was my favorite character and to read in great detail about his murder I was taken back. I thought the calmness in Dorian as he killed Basil was rather odd and creepy, he kind of reminds me of a serial killer because he feels nothing when he kills. I was also surprised by the dramatic shift in Dorian’s character. I knew he was turning into a different person throughout the book, but I never expected it to get this bad. I was very confused with the whole bar scene. What was actually in the Chinese box and why did he need to go to the bar after he found it? Who is that girl and how does she know Dorian? All of these questions are still running through my head as I anticipate the next sections readings.

**Application:**

Human nature is revealed in the actions of both Dorian and Basil. Basil behaves as any good friend would, and is worried about the rumors he hears. He does not believe them, and tells Dorian that people are raising horrible accusations against him. An example of this can be seen in chapter 12 when Basil says, “I think it right that you should know that the most dreadful things are being said against you in London." Dorian however reveals a whole new side of himself and the nature of his temper. An example of this can be seen in chapter 13 when Dorian becomes completely enraged by Basil trying to ask for forgiveness of Dorian’s sins. Overall human nature in this section is very dependent upon the person and their vulnerability.

Human roles and behaviors can be seen in the actions of the characters. For example in chapter 14 when Dorian black mails Alan, in the situation he controls and/or dominates the situation. In response to the black mail the author describes Alan as turning pale and looking ill. The way he behaves in this situation is influences by the actions of Dorian Gray. Another prime example is seen in James Vane when he attacks Dorian in the alley in chapter 16. He pulls a gun on him and says, “I swore I would kill you in return (for killing his sister). For years I have sought you.” This statement shows that James is a hunter and all about revenge when it comes to his sister.

Human ideals are expressed in the way the characters interact with each other (how well they know each other) and their actions. In chapter 15 when Dorian is seated at the table with Henry, and he is acting rather strange, Henry picks up on it. He says to Dorian, “Dorian…what is the matter with you to-night? You are quite out of sorts." Henry values Dorian’s friendship, and therefore asks what’s wrong with him, because he knows his friend is not being himself. It is said that actions speak louder than words, and this section gives a wonderful example to back that up. In chapter 16 when James attacks Dorian he says, “You had better confess your sin, for as sure as I am James Vane, you are going to die." James loved his little sister so much he swore revenge on the man who made her kill herself. That phrase is what he said to the man who is at fault.